

ILLEGIB

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DD/A REGISTRY

OFE 81-1006

FILE: Training - 5

16 January 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director for Administration

STAT FROM:  Acting Director of Training and Education

SUBJECT: Michel Thomas Method of Language Learning

REFERENCE: Letter to DCI from Wesley W. Posvar, dated  
6 January 1981

1. Last spring the Language School of the Office of Training and Education became aware of the Michel Thomas Method of Language Learning through publicity presented at professional conferences. In May 1980, Mr. Thomas was invited to the Language School to explain and discuss his teaching methods. The consensus of the instructors and professional linguists from the Language School who interviewed him is in sharp contrast with Chancellor Posvar's impression of the Thomas teaching technique.

2. The Language School was skeptical about Mr. Thomas' success and asked him for a list of students in the Washington area who had been trained by his method. With his permission, oral proficiency tests were administered to eight French, Spanish and German trained persons. None demonstrated proficiencies approaching his claims. Mr. Charles E. Morin, referred to in Chancellor Posvar's letter, was an enthusiastic proponent of the method but a reluctant conversationalist.

3. The Language School also contacted the Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Monterey and was advised that Mr. Thomas had conducted a two-week demonstration program for them. DLI's response to the method was quite negative. No further negotiations were conducted by DLI with Mr. Thomas.

4. On the basis of a serious and specific examination by the Language School of Mr. Thomas' method and claims, we informed him in a letter dated 26 November 1980 that we had no further interest in pursuing a joint effort in language training.

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5. We feel confident, on the basis of professional judgment and practical inquiry, that the Michel Thomas Method does not serve the language learning needs of our school.

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